

5/28/70

Dear Paul (Gary, Howard),

I enclose my newest letter to Rhoads on what is, from the correspondence, a subject on which they are really up tight, the Ferrie documents and my request for a duplicate of the list that without any possibility of doubt Johnson did have and did give me when, in response to my request referred to, he did show me what he then represented as all the available Ferrie documents.

Why are they, in this case meaning Johnson more than anyone else, for he drafts the responses, so hung up on Ferrie? I do not know the answer, but some of the possibilities are response to FBI request, the fact that the documents are not properly withheld, and that I have caught Johnson at something wrong of in the act of serving other than Archives interests in this matter.

It is apparent that, aside from proper response to this inquiry, to do what he actually did do, draw all the Ferrie documents together to determine what he could make available in response to anticipated press request once Ferrie's name surfaced, as it did a little more than a month later, he had to have had such a list. It is also apparent that he lied to the press and he did to me, seriously understating the extent of the withheld Ferrie material.

I can come close to pinpointing that date from my diary. I wrote that note after I returned from the Archives that very day, when I examined the Oswald shirt and prepared my careful memo on it. I did not leave home again until 1/17, when I went to New York for my then-famous debate with Louis Nizer, which got a total of 16 hours of prime-time airing. I went to the Archives 1/20 and was there but briefly, this being the day I took Betnell to introduce him to British correspondents I thought could afford him some security and company. I was in the Archives again only briefly 1/23, my records showing I left there 1:30 p.m. and again the next day. My next trip was 2/2, and from it I was home by about 2 p.m. On the 5th I left on a New England speaking tour, got caught in a blizzard, and spent the day of the 8th and to about 3 a.m. the 9th backgrounding Bob Scott and others on the radio news staff there on Andrews and N.O., in anticipation of the Garrison investigation becoming public, as it did one week to the day later, I went to the Archives again 2/27 and 3/3, on the second occasion meeting Semple of the NYTimes and driving him back to his office. It was one of these two days that Johnson read off to me his list.

I interpret this incident as I look back on it as one of the things that began to change my attitude toward the Archives, as one of the things that persuaded me they were acting as less than an institution for research, dominated by principles of snobship, etc.

Prior to finding this note, as I was going over my Archives files to bind them together in sets, with your visit so fresh in mind, I had decided to write you to suggest that when next you are here, I think you should go over my Archives correspondence files for the period prior to when I began sending you copies of my letters to them and of their responses. I think it might in the future be helpful if your file completely duplicated mine or did so to the degree you think it worthwhile as of the time you examine it. To this and other ends, I am establishing a separate file of everything of which I have extra copies and it is so labelled. This I am doing in chronological order and I have to this moment completed it through 1967. I hope to get 1968 done today before having to leave for Baltimore, about 2 p.m. As Howard commented when he went over this period, it is rather rich in a number of areas, especially in establishing the history and career of such things as the Zapruder film and in the really gut instinct with which I zeroed in on the autopsy-medical stuff and the establishment of a record of close to total official dishonesty on it.

This is the period I caught them reclassifying what had been declassified until my request for it, when they reclassified it and simultaneously denied they were going over my request - how else would they have known? When I caught them eliminating certain things they knew I'd requested copied, when they didn't inform me they had reclassified that which I'd requested until I noted its absence in what had been copied, when they deceived me into believing I had been given access to all the medico-autopsy material with the use of lower-case "autopsy file" in a way they later interpreted as upper case "Autopsy File", referring to the JFK file only rather than, as the letters show, my reference, to everything at all relating in any way to the autopsy. This also is the period when I first began to get the Secret Service to deliver things for me and where I missed some of it because I didn't read the Archives ellipsis as carefully as I should have and let myself be diverted by what I not suppose was designed to this end.

I have not taken time to read these things as I go over them, for I will have to scan them in preparation for the coming suits when I have completed this. However, in the course of establishing complete files, I do note a certain amount as I do the mechanical work. One of these things, the request for the Ferrie material, caught my eye simply because it was illegible in the copies of my original carbon, which was less clear than it should have been simply because - used some free red tissue in marking my carbons.

In any historical assessment of either the subject, the work we are doing or the position and function of the Archives and other agencies in it, I think this correspondence will have value, and if for no other reason at least large parts of it should be included in your own files. However, in specialized areas, one of which is my early searching for what might relate to what I now call, as you also do, "Agent Oswald", there should be value here. Beginning with this Ferrie request of 1/67 I think there can be shown a systematic official effort of at least obfuscation.

I do not know the degree to which it would pay Gary to go over this. Howard has already begun to, and we have a record of the point he reached in it. I am more accessible to him anyway.

When I am finished doing this with the Archives correspondence files, I will do the same with other agencies, including at least Justice and Secret Service. Here also and more openly the record of false response is glaringly clear, with Justice especially on the Ferrie matter, where Fred Vinson wrote me a letter that is a deliberate lie or the Archives later lied about it, but they cannot both be true. Perhaps this came when I was sending you copies. In my opinion, Ferrie and "Agent Oswald" cannot be separated. I had written Clark about the Ferrie documents and Vinson told me they were then making a review of what was withheld. Archives said there was no such review.

Yesterday Rolapp's office phoned to tell me (after three weeks) that the perhaps 1-15 minutes of xeroxing had been done. I will be writing Rolapp about this and sending you a copy. They make it appear spontaneous when it is not, for I have been working with a Washington Post reporter whose work was twice interrupted, first by his own illness and then by a death in his family. He phoned me the day before for an okay to go to Justice and ask for access to what I had had and I told him okay. He went either then or yesterday and they showed it to him, natch. He is to do a story we have a general understanding they will syndicate. The London Times is to do a story also, their correspondent having spent about four hours here yesterday, on the British angles. Whether or not CBS does anything, as they said two weeks ago they would, I will, after the Post's story appears, be doing some radio broadcasts already arranged for. So, there will be some news of our victory using 5 USC 852. When in papers, Howard might tell McKinney, Gary WLOL. Nest,